

# John Deere Classic

Sunday, July 9, 2023

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

## Sepp Straka

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the winner of the 2023 John Deere Classic, Sepp Straka. Sepp, congratulations on your victory today. Very convincing 9-under, 62 to get the job done in the final round. Especially given I've heard everybody talk a lot about where you started from after round one, so just amazing. Just a few opening thoughts on how it feels to collect the win.

SEPP STRAKA: Yes, it's pretty awesome. Like you said, I didn't think I would be sitting here on Thursday after the round.

Just found some magic and then started hitting the ball really good, which I did on Thursday too, but really started making some putts. I think that's the key out here. You've got to get the putter hot. Thankfully it stayed hot.

THE MODERATOR: Was there a big difference today? Did you find something yesterday? Was it a mindset or just things kind of went your way today?

SEPP STRAKA: A little bit of a tweak in the setup. My toe was getting up a little bit. Tim Yelverton, who I work with on putting, texted me on Thursday night and said my toe was sticking up a little bit.

So I got my hand a little higher and flattened that thing out. Yeah, started online and got hot.

THE MODERATOR: One last question from me and then we'll open it up to questions. With the win, you move to 18 in the FedEx Cup, 27 in the Official World Golf Ranking. What does this do for you? You may not have had a chance to fully process it yet, but what does this do with your mindset as you are looking forward to the big part of the season coming up?

SEPP STRAKA: It's great. It's always great to be playing good golf towards the end of the season. One of the big goals is always to make it to Atlanta, and this is a big step towards that. Hopefully I can build off of this and just keep it going.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

**Q. Your fellow Bulldog, Brendon, and Alex both had very high praise for your round, and why not? You shattered a 41-year record for a closing round here that was held by the late Payne Stewart. I don't know if you are aware of that.**

SEPP STRAKA: I did not know that.

**Q. How exciting is that?**

SEPP STRAKA: It's pretty exciting. Yeah, I knew somebody was going to make a push today. The birdies are out there. The wind was down a little bit compared to yesterday.

Yeah, thankfully I had a really good ball-striking day and had a hot putter going. So I just tried not to think about any of the situation too much because I was so far ahead of the leaders and just tried to keep making birdies.

**Q. What does it feel like to finish early and go to the driving range and wonder for a while?**

SEPP STRAKA: It's stressful. It's very stressful because at that point it's out of your hands. When you are on the course, obviously you're really nervous, but you have control of the situation. When you are just sitting there, you kind of feel helpless.

Once I got on the range and started warming up for a potential playoff, I started feeling a little better. Yeah, thankfully didn't need that playoff.

**Q. Sepp, how quickly were you able to throw the 18th hole out of your mind while you were waiting? That seems to be the kind of thing that would just hang over a guy.**

SEPP STRAKA: Pretty quickly. I hit one bad shot. Honestly after that the recovery, the wedge shot was great after that shot into the green. I hit a really good number and hit a really good putt and just broke a little more than I thought.

You know, I gave myself a lot of grace there because that



was my only real bad shot of the day. So, yeah, I didn't dwell on it too much.

**Q. You mentioned in the TV interviews that you weren't focused on the holy grail there, the 59, when you were standing in the fairway. Not a thought ever?**

SEPP STRAKA: It popped in my mind, for sure, yeah, but I wasn't going to change my game plan or strategy for the 59.

The goal was still to keep the same game plan and try to finish and win a golf tournament. As fun as the 59 would be, I think winning the golf tournament is always more fun.

**Q. Did you feel like you needed a birdie to close it or were you...**

SEPP STRAKA: I didn't know. I was so far ahead of the leaders. They had so many holes to play, somebody could have gotten hot.

I had no clue. I was just trying to hit my target, hit my number, and just made a bad swing on 18, but then recovered nicely and unfortunately missed the putt. Yeah, I didn't really know.

**Q. To be at 11-under with 17 in front of you, what were your expectations after you reached that figure?**

SEPP STRAKA: The goal on 17 is always to make birdie, especially with that pin. It was pretty gettable.

I hit a really good drive off the tee. The wind was off the left, so just to keep it in the first cut there was really nice.

Then made a really good swing on my second shot that just kicked right and in the bunker. Decent bunker shot and just hit a good putt and misread it a little bit. Yeah, like I said, I was just trying to execute the game plan.

**Q. Do you really have to pay for the house now?**

SEPP STRAKA: Oh, yeah. They're not letting me off the hook there (laughing).

**Q. How much is that house going to go for on AirBNB next year? Two for two, huh?**

SEPP STRAKA: I hope J.T. went ahead and renewed before this (laughing).

**Q. How do you envision celebrating this victory, and who are you most excited to share this big day with?**

SEPP STRAKA: Definitely my wife. Excited to get back to her.

Yeah, tonight I don't know. Just do the media. I have no idea. My agent is here, so I'm sure he is planning something for me.

Yeah, to get back to my wife would be great.

**Q. How about your weekend here, just the feeling with the fans here and the whole setup here at TPC Deere Run?**

SEPP STRAKA: It's amazing. It's been here for so long. They've got it down. They run such a good event. The golf course is in great shape. The volunteers are all extremely helpful. One of the more smoothly run events on tour. Yeah, look forward to coming back.

**Q. You were born in Austria, but you grew up in Georgia. You sound more Georgian than Austrian.**

SEPP STRAKA: Only when I'm speaking English.

**Q. Are you more of a country music fan than you would be of Beethoven or string music or Austrian...**

SEPP STRAKA: Probably. Beethoven is a little before my time, but I'm more of a Mozart guy for picking there.

Yeah, I listen to that too. But, yeah, probably more of a country music than the classic.

**Q. But music notwithstanding, you have been in Georgia since you were 14 years old. Went to Georgia. Are you as American as you are Austrian in a sense?**

SEPP STRAKA: I used to say I'm 50% Austrian and 50% American. A friend of mine who is Austrian, Clemons, corrected me one day and said, you are 100% Austrian, 100% American.

You can't really pick between the two. They're both part of my upbringing. Yeah, I wouldn't change it for the world.

**Q. The 100% Austrian could be competing in the Ryder Cup in Europe. Is this a thought now with this victory in hand?**

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah. You know, September is a few months away, and I'm glad my game is in good shape. Hopefully I can make a push for that.

**Q. In your wildest dreams did you ever anticipate being a widely successful opening act for Blake**



**Shelton?**

SEPP STRAKA: Is that what they're all here for (laughing)? I didn't even know he was playing, to be honest with you. I knew there was a concert. I didn't know it was Blake Shelton, so yeah, might have to hang around for a little bit.

**Q. (Off microphone).**

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah.

**Q. What was going through your mind when you are standing over the approach shot on 18, the second shot on 18? You say you weren't thinking necessarily 59, but what was going through your mind at that point?**

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, I was just trying to hit my target. We had picked out a good number, and I think the number-wise I executed. I hit the ball really solid, but I just pulled it way left of my target.

Yeah, I was just trying to hit my target about seven, eight yards right of the pin and let it feed in there. Once it started going left with the wind off the right, it was never going to come back.

So, yeah, it was an unfortunate time for a bad swing, but thankfully it didn't hurt me.

**Q. (Off microphone).**

SEPP STRAKA: It was a few numbers. We got hole number, carry number, and then -- I don't know. I think the hole was 180-ish, 85 maybe. Yeah, something like that.

8-iron. Yeah, I was trying to pitch it about seven yards short of the pin and right of it.

**Q. For those of us who will never get in that type of zone you were in through 17 holes, what was that just like shot after shot racking birdie after birdie up as you're going through that round?**

SEPP STRAKA: It was crazy because you don't want to think about it too much because you don't want to lose the feeling.

But, yeah, I was hitting the ball really well. I don't think the ball-striking was as out of this world as the putting. The putting was just phenomenal.

I was reading the greens really well. Some really tough putts that I put a good read on and was just locked in on

my speed and my line.

**Q. Can you remember the last time you were that dialed in, locked in like that?**

SEPP STRAKA: Maybe Friday (laughing). I got pretty hot on Friday too, so yeah, it happened twice this week probably.

But, yeah, probably not quite as locked in as I was today. But, yeah, it doesn't happen very often, so when it does, you just have to kind of go with it.

**Q. Sepp, growing up did you envision yourself sitting in the winner's circle for a second time, and what are your expectations? I mean, how do you view yourself in the PGA TOUR pantheon, the spectrum? Do you feel like you can compete with anybody out here?**

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, I think so. I think one thing I've tried to work on a lot and have done a better job of is being more consistent in my practice and that translating into tournaments.

But at my best, I do feel like I can compete with anybody. Obviously the last three days I could have competed with just about anybody in the world, but growing up I never would have thought I would have a chance to even play on the PGA TOUR.

This is all just a big dream come true. I never really had a whole lot of confidence in myself growing up.

I always was around really good players. My brother was a little better than me. My class in high school was full of really good players, so I never really had a lot of success early on.

Never would have even dreamt of playing here, let alone winning twice on the PGA TOUR.

**Q. Going forward, knowing your Thursday round and where you're sitting right now, how will that help you in the tournaments down the road knowing maybe a shaky start, but just stay at it?**

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, for sure. Any time you play a tournament, you get in contention, you find out something new. That experience is invaluable.

So just knowing that I was in 130-something place after the first round and ended up winning, you just can't ever really count yourself out because you could get hot any moment.

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